

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

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C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 6415

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, MASS, BG, US
SUBJECT: MILITARY SUPPLIES FOR BANGLADESH

REF: DACCA 6357

1. FOREIGN SECRETARY TABARAK HUSAIN ASKED ME TO SEE HIM DECEMBER 22 TO GIVE A FORMAL RESPONSE TO OUR OFFER OF A SURPLUS MINESWEEPER WHICH COULD BE CONVERTED TO A HYDROGRAPHIC RESEARCH SHIP. TABARAK SAID HE HAD DISCUSSED THIS MATTER IN DETAIL WITH GENERAL ZIA AND ADMIRAL KHAN. BOTH DEEPLY APPRECIATED OUR OFFER. HOWEVER, THEY FELT THEY HAD TO DECLINE SINCE THE SHIP WE HAD OFFERED WOULD NOT, IN THEIR VIEW, HOLD UP UNDER THE SEVERE CYLONIC STORMS WHICH OCCUR ALL TOO FREQUENTLY IN THE BAY OF BENGAL. ADMIRAL KHAN HAD STRESSED THAT A VESSEL SMALLER THAN 750 TONS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO OPERATE IN THE BAY DURING THE RAINY SEASON. MOREOVER, THE HYDROGRAPHIC SHIP WAS INTENDED TO INVESTIGATE AND SURVEY COASTAL WATERS AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES.
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AS SUCH, IT SHOULD BE AT SEA FOR A MINIMUM OF 220 DAYS A YEAR AND SHOULD THUS HAVE THE CAPACITY TO CARRY MORE FUEL, WATER, PERSONNEL AND OTHER SUPPLIES THAN WOULD BE POSSIBLE IN THE CASE OF THE SHIP WE HAD OFFERED. ADMIRAL KHAN AND GENERAL ZIA VERY MUCH HOPED WE WOULD BE ABLE TO MAKE A

VESSEL AVAILABLE IN THE 750 TO 1,000 TON RANGE.

2. TABARAK SAID HE HAD ALSO BEEN ASKED TO INFORM ME THAT, WHILE THE MINESWEEPER WAS NOT SUITABLE FOR HYDROGRAPHIC RESEARCH IN THE BAY OF BENGAL, THE BDG WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO HAVE IT TO USE FOR ITS ORIGINAL PURPOSE. TABARAK NOTED THAT MINESWEEPERS ARE PURELY DEFENSIVE VESSELS AND SAID HE HOPED PROVIDING SUCH A SHIP WOULD BE WITHIN OUR POLICY GUIDELINES. HE SAID THAT IN ADDITION TO CLEARING CHANNELS FOR INNOCENT MECHANISMEN IF THIS SHOULD BECOME NECESSARY, THE MINESWEEPER WOULD BE USED FOR FISHERY PROTECTION AND NORMAL SURVEILLANCE DUTIES. THE BDG WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO HAVE IT UNDER THE TERMS WE HAD PROPOSED WITH ITS ORIGINAL EQUIPMENT IN TACT.

3. TURNING TO A RELATED TOPIC, TABARAK SAID HE ALSO WANTED TO STRESS THE IMPORTANCE WHICH THE BDG ATTACHED TO OBTAINING ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT FOR THE AIR FORCE. HE NOTED THAT "DISRUPTIVE ELEMENTS" WERE CAPITALIZING ON DISSATISFACTION WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES OVER THE LACK OF EQUIPMENT WHICH WOULD ENABLE THEM TO FUNCTION AS PROFESSIONAL MILITARY MEN. WHILE THEIR EXPECTATIONS WERE MODEST, TABARAK SAID IT WAS ESSENTIAL THAT THE ARMED FORCES HAVE CERTAIN MINIMAL ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT TO COUNTER THE GROWING MORALE PROBLEM. OTHERWISE THERE MIGHT BE ANOTHER UPHEAVAL WITHIN THE MILITARY. TABARAK SAID HE RECOGNIZED THAT FIGHTER AIRCRAFT

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WERE OUT OF THE QUESTION BUT HE VERY MUCH HOPED WE COULD ASSIST WITH TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT AND PERHAPS HELICOPTERS. IN ADDITION TO DEFENSIVE MILITARY USES, THESE WOULD ALSO BE ESSENTIAL FOR DISASTER RELIEF AND OTHER ECONOMIC PURPOSES.

4. I TOLD TABARAK HE WAS RIGHT IN HIS ASSUMPTION THAT FIGHTER AIRCRAFT WERE OUT OF THE QUESTION. I RECOGNIZED THE NEED FOR IMPROVED TRANSPORT CAPABILITY IN A COUNTRY WHERE TRANSPORTATION IS AS POOR AS IN BANGLADESH, BUT SAID I VERY MUCH DOUBTED WE HAD EXCESS TRANSPORT AIRCRAFT OR HELICOPTERS. I NOTED THAT OUR ORIGINAL PLAN HAD BEEN THAT TECHNICAL LEVEL TALKS WOULD BE HELD IN WASHINGTON AFTER WE HAD RECEIVED AND ANALYZED THE BDG'S MODIFIED REQUIREMENTS LIST. WHILE WE COULD TALK ABOUT THE DETAILS OF MILITARY TRAINING AND THE HYDROGRAPHIC VESSEL HERE, I FELT IT WOULD BE PREFERABLE TO

TACKLE THE GENERAL SUBJECT OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT
ON A COORDINATED BASIS DURING THESE TALKS RATHER
THAN PIECEMEAL. TABARAK AGREED.

5. ACTION REQUESTED: PLEASE ADVISE (1) WHETHER WE
HAVE A SHIP IN THE 750 TO 1,000 TON RANGE WHICH COULD
BE MADE AVAILABLE TO BANGLADESH FOR CONVERSION TO
A HYDROGRAPHIC RESEARCH VESSEL; (2) WHETHER WE COULD
MAKE THE MINESWEEPER AVAILABLE FOR USE UNDER ITS
ORIGINAL MISSION; AND (3) WHEN WASHINGTON WOULD BE
PREPARED TO RECEIVE THE TECHNICAL TEAM FROM
BANGLADESH TO DISCUSS THE LIST SUBMITTED BY
ADMIRAL KHAN.
MASTERS

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